

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
ICA-11 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02  
OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /106 W  
-----120394 131226Z /20

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5066  
INFO AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

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TAGS: PDEV, UK  
SUBJECT: GLASGOW GARSCADDEN BY-ELECTION

REF: (A) LONDON 5397, (B) EDINBURGH 96

SUMMARY: THE APRIL 13 GLASGOW GARSCADDEN BY-ELECTION  
WILL BE THE FIRST MAJOR TEST OF THE POLITICAL WATER  
IN SCOTLAND SINCE THE OCTOBER 1974 GENERAL ELECTION.  
AS SUCH, IT WILL HAVE IMPORTANT PORTENTS FOR THE  
GOVERNMENT, THE SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS AND THE  
CONSERVATIVES. TRADITIONALLY, A "SAFE" LABOR SEAT,  
THIS RACE PROMISES TO BE CLOSELY RUN BETWEEN THE LABOR  
AND NATIONALIST CANDIDATES. MOST INDICATIONS POINT TO  
LABOR AS THE LIKELY WINNER, BUT THE OUTCOME WILL HINGE  
ON THE IMPACT OF THE ABORTION ISSUE IN A HEAVILY CATHOLI  
AREA AND THE TORIES' ABILITY TO WIN BACK MUCH OF THEIR  
TRADITIONAL SUPPORT WHICH WENT TO THE SCOTTISH NATIONA-  
LISTS IN OCTOBER 1974. END SUMMARY.

1. THE GLASGOW GARSCADDEN BY-ELECTION, TO BE HELD  
APRIL 13, WILL BE A CRUCIAL TEST BETWEEN SCOTTISH  
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NATIONAL PARTY (SNP) AND LABOR PARTY IN SCOTLAND. AS  
THE ONLY BY-ELECTION IN SCOTLAND SINCE THE OCTOBER 1974  
GENERAL ELECTION, IT WILL DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT LABOR  
PARTY CAN CONTAIN THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND PREVENT  
IT FROM PICKING UP ITS TWELFTH SEAT IN WESTMINSTER.  
GARSCADDEN, IN WEST GLASGOW, IS A TRADITIONAL, WORKING  
CLASS LABOR CONSTITUENCY, WHICH INCLUDES SOME RELATIVELY

PROSPEROUS SECTIONS AND INCORPORATES THE NOTORIOUS DRUMCHAPEL ESTATE, WHERE UNEMPLOYMENT IS ESTIMATED TO EXCEED 40 PERCENT. IN THE OCTOBER 1974 GENERAL ELECTION THE LABOR PARTY CANDIDATE OUTDISTANCED HIS SNP RIVAL BY 7,000 VOTES. THE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE TRAILED SIGNIFICANTLY, AS THE TORY VOTE SEEMED TO COLLAPSE, IN PART NO DOUBT DUE TO "TACTICAL" VOTING.

2. THE CAMPAIGN FOR GARSCADDEN HAS GENERATED INTENSE PUBLIC INTEREST NORTH OF THE BORDER -- INDEED, OBSERVER HAVE NOTED THAT IT HAS RECEIVED MORE ATTENTION ON A SCOTLAND-WIDE BASIS THAN VIRTUALLY ANY OTHER BY-ELECTION OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS. THE MAJOR ISSUES IN THIS STRONGLY CONTESTED RACE ARE UNEMPLOYMENT, SEPARATISM AND, MOST RECENTLY, ABORTION.

3. LABOR CANDIDATE DONALD DEWAR IS WELL KNOWN IN SCOTTISH LABOR CIRCLES, AND A FORMER MP FOR ABERDEEN SOUTH (1966-1970). ALTHOUGH DEWAR HAD TO OVERCOME AN INITIAL LACK OF ENTHUSIASM AMONG CONSTITUENCY PARTY MEMBERS, HE HAS ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS A POPULAR CANDIDATE. AT THE RECENT ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SCOTTISH COUNCIL OF LABOR PARTY IN DUNOON (LONDON 4867), DEWAR DELIVERED THE MOST IMPRESSIVE SPEECH OF THE CONFERENCE IN A DIRECT AND HARD-HITTING ATTACK ON THE SNP. LABOR OBVIOUSLY ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RETAINING THIS SEAT -- IF GARSCADDEN FALLS TO THE SNP, NO LABOR SEATS IN SCOTLAND WOULD, AT LEAST IN THEORY, BE FREE FROM THE NATIONALIST THREAT.

4. THE SNP CANDIDATE, KEITH BOVEY, IS A GLASGOW LAWYER AND CONTESTED THE SEAT IN LAST GENERAL ELECTION. HE WAS WELL KNOWN TO THE CONSTITUENCY AT THE OUTSET AND HAD CLEARLY HOPED TO CONSOLIDATE THE DRAMATIC SWING OF VOTERS TOWARD THE SNP IN THE MAY 1977 LOCAL ELECTION WHEN THAT PARTY TOOK ALL SIX OF GARSCADDEN'S WARDS. PACIFIST BOVEY'S CAMPAIGN WAS TROUBLED, HOWEVER, BY REACTION TO HIS REMARK THAT THE YARROW SHIPYARD, THE AREA'S LARGEST EMPLOYER, SHOULD ABANDON BUILDING WAR-SHIPS AND CONCENTRATE EXCLUSIVELY ON COMMERCIAL VESSELS. THE YARROW WORK FORCE, MANY OF WHOM LIVE IN GARSCADDEN, AND WHO ALREADY FEAR THE PROSPECT OF UNEMPLOYMENT. WAS NOT ENCHANTED. THE PACIFIST ELEMENT OF THE SNP ALSO CAME UNDER ATTACK WHEN A LOCAL COMMITTEE LEADER, SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF BOVEY, STATED THAT HE ADMIRERD SCOTS WHO REFUSED TO SERVE IN WWII AND "DIE IN ENGLAND'S WAR." BOVEY SEEMS TO HAVE SURVIVED THESE EARLY CAMPAIGN GAFFS AND HAS CONCENTRATED HEAVILY ON THE ALLEGED FAI-

LURE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICIES. HE ALSO HAS

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

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OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /093 W

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HAD THE FULL USE OF THE WELL ORGANIZED AND HIGH EFFEC-  
TIVE SNP PARTY MACHINERY. SNP ORGANIZERS TOLD US THAT  
THREE COMPLETE CANVASSES OF VOTERS WHO SUPPORTED THE  
PARTY IN THE LAST LOCAL ELECTION HAD BEEN TAKEN BY  
LAST WEEK. AN SNP VICTORY, THEY BELIEVE, WOULD DEMONS-  
TRATE THE PARTY IS CONTINUING ITS GROWTH AND PROVIDE  
AN IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST IN THE EXPECTED FALL  
GENERAL ELECTION.

5. THE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE, IAIN LAWSON, A YOUNG  
(25) LOCAL RESIDENT, HAS LAUNCHED AN AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN  
WITH A VERY HIGH LEVEL OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SUPPORT.  
THE TORIES ALSO PLACE GREAT IMPORTANCE ON DEFEATING THE  
SNP IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH THAT THE NATIONALIST SWING  
HAS PEAKED BEFORE A FALL ELECTION. LAWSON STARTLED  
OBSERVERS EARLY IN THE CAMPAIGN WHEN HE ANNOUNCED THAT  
HIS OWN PRIVATE POLL INDICATED THAT THE TORIES WERE  
AHEAD OF THE SNP IN THE RACE. HE IS AN AVOWED ADMIRER  
OF THE ANTI-DEVOLUTIONIST CONSERVATIVE SPOKESMAN ON  
SCOTLAND, TEDDY TAYLOR, AND HAS EMPHASIZED CONSERVATIVE  
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ECONOMIC POLICIES AND LAW AND ORDER ISSUES. A TOUGH-MINDED TORY POSITION PAPER ON CRIME IN SCOTLAND WAS RELEASED APRIL 10 AND LAWSON'S APPEAL FOR "SANITY IN THE STREETS" APPEARS TO HAVE HAD AN IMPACT ON THE VOTERS, PARTICULARLY FOLLOWING THE BRUTAL MURDER OF A CHILD IN GLASGOW LAST WEEK. LAWSON IS NOT WITHOUT HIS CRITICS, HOWEVER, EVEN AMONG HIS OWN PARTY MEMBERS. SOME OBSERVERS HAVE CALLED HIM BRASH, ARROGANT AND NOT REALLY WELL VERSED ON THE ISSUES, AND OUR SOURCES SUGGEST THAT AMONG THE THREE CANDIDATES, HE HAS BEEN THE LEAST SUCCESSFUL IN DEBATING THE ISSUES. THERE ARE FIVE OTHER "FRINGE" CANDIDATES, INCLUDING THE COMMUNIST PARTY (THE LIBERALS HAVE NOT PUT UP A CANDIDATE).

6. THE ISSUES FOR MUCH OF THE CAMPAIGN FOCUSSED ON THE QUESTIONS OF UNEMPLOYMENT, INFLATION AND SEPARATISM (SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE). PREDICTABLY, DEWAR'S CAMPAIGN HAS CENTERED UPON AN ATTEMPT TO PUT UK'S ECONOMIC PLIGH IN A WORLD CONTEXT, EMPHASIZING THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN BRINGING BRITAIN BACK TO NEAR PROSPERITY FROM THE WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS. THE RECENTLY-ANNOUNCED SINGLE-DIGIT INFLATION FIGURES AND THE APRIL 11 BUDGET MESSAGE, CARRIED TO GARSCADDEN BY SHIRLEY WILLIAMS, HAVE BEEN HELPFUL, BUT DEWAR HAS HAD TO CONTEND WITH OTHER GRAVE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS PECULIAR TO SCOTLAND, INCLUDING THE STEADY CLOSURE OF TRADITIONAL INDUSTRIES AND AN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FAR EXCEEDING THAT OF THE UK AS A WHOLE. BOVEY HAS COUNTERED WITH WELL ARGUED ECONOMIC PROPOSALS BASED ON AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND DERIVING ITS INCOME FROM NORTH SEA OIL -- AN INCOME WHICH WOULD BE USED PRIMARILY TO ESTABLISH NEW INDUSTRIES AND DIVERSIFY THE INDUSTRIAL BASE. ABORTION IS THE MOST RECENT ISSUE OF THE CAMPAIGN, AND IN A CONSTI-

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TUENCY WITH A RELATIVELY HIGH ROMAN CATHOLIC POPULATION (EST. 35-40 PERCENT), IS EXPECTED TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE OUTCOME. "SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE UNBORN CHILD" (SPUC) HAS BROUGHT THE ISSUE TO THE CENTER OF ATTENTION IN THE CAMPAIGN, STRONGLY URGING ITS FOLLOWERS TO VOTE AGAINST DEWAR, WHO SUPPORTED THE 1976 BILL ON ABORTION. BOVEY AND LAWSON ARE BOTH ACCEPTABLE TO THE ANTI-ABORTIONISTS FOR HAVING DECLARED THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE EXISTING LAW. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF THE ABORTION ISSUE ON THE ELECTION RESULT, BUT ONE SNP ORGANIZER TOLD US THAT THE

SPUC GROUP HELD TWO MEETINGS IN GLASGOW DURING THE PAST TEN DAYS WHICH EACH ATTRACTED MORE THAN 400 PEOPLE, A FIGURE NONE OF THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES HAD BEEN ABLE TO MATCH AT THEIR POLITICAL RALLIES.

7. COMMENT. WE ENDORSE THE ORTHODOX VIEW THAT THE GARSCADDEN BY-ELECTION IS AN IMPORTANT ONE, PARTICULARLY FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SNP. GIVEN THE HISTORICAL TENDENCY FOR THE GOVERNING PARTY TO LOSE GROUND IN . BY-ELECTIONS AND THE PROBLEMS PECULIAR TO GARSCADDEN AND SCOTLAND, THE SNP APPEAR TO HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
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WINNING THIS SEAT. OUR ANALYSIS, HOWEVER, SUGGESTS THA MUCH OF THE EROSION IN THE CONSERVATIVE VOTE IN GARSCADDEN BETWEEN FEBRUARY AND OCTOBER 1974 ELECTIONS WAS TACTICAL (I.E., TRADITIONAL CONSERVATIVE VOTERS, DESPAIRING OF THEIR PARTY'S CHANCES TO WIN THE SEAT, THREW THEIR VOTES TO THE SNP IN AN EFFORT TO DEFEAT LABOR). THAT SITUATION HAS CHANGED. THE TORY LEADER-SHIP, WE UNDERSTAND, IS AS CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBI-LITY OF AN SNP VICTORY AS THE GOVERNMENT, AND HAS INVES-TED HEAVILY IN TRYING TO WIN BACK THAT VOTE. THE OUTCOME, ACCORDINGLY, COULD WELL HINGE ON HOW WELL THEY SUCCEED.

8. AT THIS POINT THE IMPACT OF THE ABORTION ISSUE  
CONSTITUTES THE OTHER MAJOR IMPONDERABLE, AND VIRTUALLY  
NO ONE IS WILLING TO PREDICT HOW IT WILL AFFECT THE  
RESULT. THE MOST RECENT POLL (ALBEIT OF UNTESTED  
RELIABILITY) INDICATES THAT LABOR IS RUNNING AHEAD OF  
THE PACK AND WILL HOLD THE SEAT, THOUGH BY A MUCH  
REDUCED MARGIN. THE MORE SUBJECTIVE ASSESSMENTS --  
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INCLUDING THE BOOKMAKERS -- GENERALLY SUPPORT THE POLL  
DATA. IF LABOR SHOULD WIN -- AND WE SUSPECT THAT IT  
WILL -- IT WILL BE AN IMPORTANT VICTORY AND, CONCOMI-  
TANTLY, A SHARP BLOW TO SNP ASPIRATIONS. BUT THE  
CREDIT WILL IN ALL PROBABILITY BELONG TO THE TORIES  
FOR HAVING RECAPTURED MUCH OF THEIR LOST FOLLOWING.

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## Message Attributes

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